

## Timber and Forestry Trends in Southeast Texas



At the March 23, 2019 meeting of the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association, Forester Hap Hatchel discussed current timber and forestry trends in East Texas. He emphasized that each forest landowner should have a plan that specifically meets his/her vision -- and stay in charge of the plan and its execution.

When acquiring forest land, be aware that landlocked property is a potential issue. As the large tracts of lands that were historically owned by mills are fractured and sold, some of the newly created tracts are landlocked. Texas legislation regarding property access that passed in the 1990's addressed only property that is owned by the State – not individuals.

The life-cycle of timber crops in southeast Texas is being reduced to 28 years by the managers of large forests owned by investment companies. Twenty-eight-year-old trees will have a smaller diameter than those harvested after 30 or more years; hence the mills pay less for the logs. If a mill advertises for 20" butts, they are focusing on a 28-year crop cycle. Shorter crop cycles reduce the price private tree farmers receive for their final crop. Hap encourages private tree farmers to grow their crops thirty years or longer to produce larger logs. When trees achieve 22" diameter at breast high, they are ready to harvest. Watch the market and then sell when the market prices are high. Prices tend to rise during extended wet weather.

Know the value of your trees before you accept an offer from a mill buyer. A timber buyer's job is to "feed the mill." When thinning, harvest every 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> row and also include the "junk" trees from the rows left standing. Let the

remaining good trees grow a full 10 years rather than cutting them after only 5 or 7 years. Pick and retain your best trees for the final harvest. Be sure to notice whether the buyer specifies the diameter 6" off the ground or breast high. There can be a 4" difference between the two.

Timber sale prices impact your property taxes and should be reported to the Texas A & M Forest Service. To review how timber tax valuations are calculated, reference the Summer 2016 issue of "The Dogwood Times" at <http://tcforest.org/downloads/Dogwood-2016-Jun.pdf>. To report your timber sales, use the Timber Tax Valuation Price Reporting Form at <http://tcforest.org/downloads/TimberTaxValuationPriceReportingForm.pdf>.